

again we have heard that story. What Agency is responsible for making sure that their arrival on our border is orderly, that they do not cross the border improperly? It is the Department of Homeland Security—the same Agency that is being denied leadership by one Senator on the other side of the aisle. It is time to get over it. It is time to give President Biden the leadership we need at that Agency as quickly as possible.

We, in contrast, know that America is a unique nation, and what makes it special is that people from all over the world can come to our shores and become Americans, not because of their race or ethnicity but because they embrace America's democratic ideals.

The son of a Holocaust survivor and an immigrant from Cuba, Mr. Mayorkas knows firsthand that America can be a beacon of hope and promise to those facing persecution. Mr. Mayorkas is an experienced national security leader who can restore integrity and decency at the Department of Homeland Security.

I personally appreciated the skill and dedication he showed as Director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. There, in the year 2012, he implemented DACA—the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals—that allowed for more than 800,000 young people to have a chance to be part of America. As Deputy Secretary, Mr. Mayorkas oversaw a \$60 billion budget and led a workforce of 230,000 individuals. He is the right man for the job, and he should be on the job today.

He excelled in that role, receiving the Department's Distinguished Service Award—the highest civilian honor—the U.S. Coast Guard's Distinguished Service Award, and a special commendation from the National Security Agency for his achievements in national security and cyber security.

Among his numerous responsibilities, he led the Department's response to the Zika and Ebola outbreaks—highly relevant and timely expertise we could use now in this COVID-19 pandemic.

He served as a Senate-confirmed U.S. attorney to California earlier in his career.

The national president of the Fraternal Order of Police has enthusiastically endorsed Mr. Mayorkas and said, "His professionalism, integrity and commitment to just and fair enforcement of the law makes him an ideal candidate to lead the department. Mr. Mayorkas has pursued criminal wrongdoers and has protected the rights of the innocent with indefatigable vigor. His work reflects all that is right in the government."

That was the statement from the Fraternal Order of Police about this nominee. He is an outstanding nominee to be Secretary of Homeland Security. His experience, qualifications, expertise, and integrity will serve America well at a time we desperately need him.

I ask the Senator who is holding his nomination to release the hold today.

Let Mr. Mayorkas go to the head of this Agency where he is desperately needed and show the kind of leadership he has over and over again for this country.

I urge my colleagues to expeditiously confirm Mr. Mayorkas so that he can serve as the next Secretary of Homeland Security.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican whip is recognized.

#### FILIBUSTER

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, there has been a lot of talk about the legislative filibuster here in the Senate over the last few days. As we started the new Congress evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats, the Republican leader had proposed that the Democrat leader include a commitment to preserving the legislative filibuster and the power-sharing agreement the leaders have been working out. This should have been easy.

Less than 4 years ago, with a Republican President in the White House and Republicans in control of the Senate and the House of Representatives, a bipartisan group of 61 Senators affirmed their support for retaining the legislative filibuster, stating: "We are united in our determination to preserve the ability of Members to engage in extended debate when bills are on the Senate floor."

There are 26—26—current Democratic Senators—a majority of the current Democratic caucus—who signed that defense of the legislative filibuster when they were in the Senate minority. It is disappointing that the Democrat leader failed to express his support for this essential Senate rule.

Nevertheless, thanks to the recent commitment from two Senate Democrats to oppose any attempt to eliminate the filibuster—a commitment which secures this key protection for minority rights—Leader MCCONNELL is now moving forward without a statement from the Democrat leader.

But it is worth taking a moment to reiterate why the legislative filibuster is so important. The legislative filibuster, of course, is essentially the requirement that 60 Senators agree before the Senate can end debate and vote on a bill. In other words, you need 60 percent of the Senate to agree before you can pass a bill. This usually means that you need the support of at least some Members of the other party before you can move legislation.

The party in power doesn't always enjoy that rule. All of us would like the opportunity to pass exactly the legislation that we want. But most of us recognize that it is a good requirement.

The legislative filibuster ensures that the minority is represented in the legislation. This would be important even if elections tended to break 60 to 40 or 70 to 30 in favor of one party or another. All Americans, whether or not they are in the majority, deserve to be

represented. But it is particularly important when you consider that our country is pretty evenly split down the middle.

While the advantage sometimes goes to Democrats and sometimes to Republicans, the truth is that our country is pretty evenly split, which means any attempt to disenfranchise the minority party means disenfranchising half of the country.

Of course, the party in power generally gets to accomplish more than the minority party—and that is appropriate. The country may be fairly evenly divided, but sometimes it wants to move more toward one side or the other.

What is not appropriate is to eliminate meaningful minority representation, which would be the consequence of eliminating the legislative filibuster. Our Founders recognized the importance of putting safeguards in place to ensure that majorities wouldn't curtail or eliminate minority rights.

That is why the Founders created the Senate. They made the Senate smaller and Senators' terms in office longer, with the intention of creating a more stable, more thoughtful, and more deliberative legislative body to check ill-considered or intemperate legislation or attempts to curtail minority rights.

And as time has gone on, the legislative filibuster is the Senate rule that has had perhaps the greatest impact in preserving the Founders' vision of the Senate. Thanks to the filibuster, it is often harder to get legislation through the Senate than the House. It requires more thought, more debate, and greater consensus—in other words, exactly—exactly—what the Founders were looking for.

I am grateful to my Democrat colleagues who have spoken up about their commitment to preserving the legislative filibuster. Republicans were committed to protecting the vital safeguard of minority rights when we were in the majority—despite, I might add, the then-President's calls repeatedly to eliminate it—and I appreciate that a number of my Democrat colleagues share that commitment.

I am particularly grateful to the Senator from West Virginia and the Senator from Arizona for their uncompromising defense of minority rights and the institution of the Senate here in recent days.

Again, however, I am disappointed the Democrat leader chose not to express his support for this essential Senate rule. I would point out that when Democrats were in the minority in the Senate, they made frequent use of the legislative filibuster.

I hope that the commitment to the legislative filibuster expressed by President Biden and a number of Senate Democrats means the end of any talk of eliminating the filibuster. No matter how appealing it might be in the moment, destroying this longstanding protection for minority rights

would be a grave error that both parties would live to regret.

I hope that all Senate Democrats will recommit themselves to preserving this fundamental feature of the Senate and to find compromise. We have work to do.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### NOMINATION OF ANTONY JOHN BLINKEN

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, today we will be considering the nomination of Antony Blinken to be President Biden's Secretary of State.

The problem I have with this nomination is that, for decades now, we have been at war in Afghanistan. The war is now called "the forever war." People lament that it goes on so long, and people say: How could it possibly keep going on?

Sixty-five to seventy percent of the American people, 65 to 70 percent of American veterans—veterans who served in the theater—say the war is enough. We should end the war in Afghanistan. How does it go on? We have got a new President. Are things going to change?

Here is the problem: Why do the wars continue? Why do the wars in Syria and Libya and Somalia and Afghanistan continue? Because the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Mr. Blinken has been a full-throated advocate of military intervention in the Middle East for 20 years. We are fooling ourselves if we think we are going to get a new policy. We are going to get more of the same.

In his hearing, I said to him: "The problem isn't that we don't compromise or that we don't have bipartisan consensus; the problem is we have too much bipartisan consensus for war."

For 20 years, he has advocated for military intervention. He advocated for the Iraq war, as did the President. President Biden was also an advocate of the Iraq war.

Now, later on they said: Well, the war wasn't that great of an idea, but we were lied to by George Bush and the intelligence, and I am willing to admit there is some truth to that. But there is a bigger lesson here. The lesson is that regime change doesn't work.

They often get unintended consequences, and you often get the opposite of what you think you are getting. They said: We must go to Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein because he is a terrible dictator. Well, yes, he was a despot, a dictator, an autocrat. You know, he wreaked havoc on his people, probably gassed the Kurds—many different

horrible things. And yet, when he was gone, what did we get? We got a power vacuum. We got more terrorism. We are back in there 10 years later because the government is nonfunctional. And what is the final result? Iran is stronger.

What does everybody talk about? Iran, Iran, Iran. Why do we worry about Iran? Well, because we toppled their biggest adversary. We used to have a balance of power between Iraq and Iran—despot on one side, despot on the other but at least a balance of power.

But who is Iran's best ally now? Iraq. Think about it. Iraq is allied with Iran. Iraq is also allied, in many ways, with Russia, as well as us, but they have also asked us to leave. They are like: Oh, thanks for our freedom, but you all can take off now.

But who supported the war? President Biden, Antony Blinken. We are back where we were 20 years ago.

Now, like I say, there is some retrenchment, there is some backing off of the position, but I don't hear from either President Biden, Candidate Biden, or from Antony Blinken that regime change is wrong.

Now, if it were wrong, you would expect there was a learning from the Iraq war, and they would say: OK. Now that we are in charge, we won't do the same.

But it turns out, when we had an Obama administration, with Blinken and the other military interventionists, in a supposedly progressive administration, we got more war. They went into Libya. Once again, the same sort of idea—the idea that regime change works, and that we will topple this terrible dictator, Qadhafi, and out of the mist, out of the embers, out of the fire will arise Thomas Jefferson. The Thomas Jefferson of Libya will take over and freedom will reign. It didn't work out so much.

So Mr. Blinken, in his hearing, admitted as much. He said: Well, maybe we overestimated the possibility that there would be rivals to replace him. Do you think?

But, see, this is sort of the expected pattern of the Middle East. The Middle East doesn't have this 1,000-year English tradition of trying to control central power, dating back to even before the Magna Carta.

But even 350 years ago, the English had a revolution trying to restrain the power of the King; 250 years ago we had our revolution to further restrain the power of the King. We have this long-standing tradition.

But in the Middle East, there is more of this tradition of tribalism, and so you have an iron fist, but when you get rid of the iron fist, it is replaced by another iron fist or nothing—by chaos.

So in Libya you get rid of Qadhafi—supported by President Obama, Vice President Biden, Antony Blinken. You have the toppling of Qadhafi, but what did you get? Chaos. More terrorism. It is unclear even whom we support—whether we support the current gov-

ernment, the U.N. government, or General Haftar, or whom we support.

The Middle East is divided, arms are flowing in on both sides, and like we always do, we fan the flames by shipping arms to everybody in the region as well. It didn't work.

So Mr. Blinken acknowledges: Yes, we underestimated the possibility there would be a rival government or a rival faction strong enough to rule Libya. Well, yeah.

So did they learn their lesson? No. About this time or a little bit later, they decided: We must go into Syria. So they spent about \$500 million—\$500 million—to train about 60 fighters. They did it in a remote area of Syria and they got them trained and they spent their \$500 million and they sent 10 of them into battle. They were all captured or killed in the first 20 minutes. Five hundred million to train sixty of the so-called moderates. But guess what. The same holds for Syria that held for Iraq, that held for Libya, that now holds for Syria. Guess what. Another despot.

But who are the people fighting against the despot? The most fierce fighters in Syria all along were al-Nusra and al-Qaida. The more jihadists, the more vicious and violent and the better the fighters were.

Were there doctors and lawyers and academics and people who want a secular form of government? Sure. But the people out there fighting and the people winning the battles were the jihadists.

So there was always the danger, if you get rid of Assad, we get another jihadist regime.

So we have to think through the policy of this. But Blinken and Biden both supported the Iraq war. It was an utter failure. They admit as much. They supported the Libyan deposing of Qadhafi and war. Then they acknowledge: Well, maybe it wasn't the best—but then they don't take any learning or knowledge from that and say: Maybe we shouldn't go into the next one—Syria. And yet, they went into Syria.

And what Blinken's response is should tell you a little bit about the danger of what we may get from Blinken as Secretary of State.

He said the problem in Syria was not doing too much but doing too little. He said: What we really should have done is gone in with full might. If we had put 100,000 troops in there, like we did in Afghanistan and like we did in Iraq, if we would have used sufficient enough force, we could have toppled Assad. But in the end, he said: We didn't do enough.

So the lesson to Blinken and Biden and this administration isn't that regime change doesn't work; it is that if we are going to do it, we need to go bigger. We need to go all in.

I would posit that regime change doesn't work; that we should not support evil regimes. If they are despots or dictators, we shouldn't arm them. But I am not for toppling every one of them